

The
Senior Boy

BY
EUGENE C. FOSTER

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The senior boy

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BY ✓

EUGENE C. FOSTER

AUTHOR OF "THE BOY AND THE CHURCH," "STARTING TO
TEACH," "THE INTERMEDIATE DEPARTMENT," ETC.



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The Senior Boy

The Senior period is a time of transition from a well-marked group of characteristics in the Intermediate period to an equally well-marked group of characteristics in the Young-People's period. Boys of twelve, thirteen, and fourteen years of age are self-centered in interests, single-minded in habits, hero worshipers. Boys eighteen years old and over are other-centered in interests, social-minded in habits, ideal worshipers. In a sense not equally true of any other period of life the Senior period is a bridging over between two more clearly defined life epochs.

The boy of fifteen is either just beyond the physiological stage of puberty or is about to pass through this experience. This whole period is fraught with unusual significance. The changes which make him a potential father affect his whole life. There is no need here to discuss these changes of themselves; it is rather for us to discover their bearing on his mental and spiritual life and upon his social impulses.

His mental state is frequently such that he is admitted, by the family, at least, to be "impossible." If the truth were known, it would frequently be found that he is likewise "impossible" in his own eyes; while those who fail to understand him are constantly in danger of passing out of his real life.

Socially, he is floundering. On one side is the strong predilection for the society of boys; on the other are the beginnings of his reaching out for the society of girls. The element of personal appearance is likely to assume large proportions; those who are not sympathetic may think that this has become unduly exaggerated. In his solitude and in his social contacts he may show the signs of many moods. He may be consistently inconsistent. He has strong likes and dislikes. He may be at times cruel, at times abundantly kind. He appears to be a creature of whims.

This boy needs the contacts of patience and sympathy; patience, and then more patience, and then more, until we reach the limit, and then go beyond; sympathy when there isn't the slightest token of appreciation, and when we feel that our sympathy is really misplaced. This does not mean that there should be coddling, or yielding to unreasonable whims, or lack of resolution in dealing with this boy. He doesn't need babying; he needs firmness, but it must be of the sympathetic variety and it must be fair beyond question. Unfairness, insincerity, inconsistency on the part of the adult who is most closely related to him will cost more in this period of life than in any other.

In the realm of spiritual development the Senior boy presents the greatest opportunity that is ever offered to the religious leader. It is evident that the highest percentage of Christian decisions is found in the Senior period and that the next highest is found in the first year of the following period. The greatest emphasis

should be placed on this unequaled opportunity for Christian decision and all that may follow it.

When will our teachers comprehend the significance of this opportunity? When will they realize that every boy who passes through their classes at this time of his life should be challenged in no uncertain way to make the great choice? When will our Bible-school management be geared up to provide for meeting this situation adequately? When will our teachers' meetings be so adjusted that those who are responsible for the boys of this age shall have an opportunity to study the characteristics and opportunities of this time? When will our records be kept so that, automatically, every boy will be looked up at the proper time? When will the pastor and every officer and teacher fully grasp the responsibility which is theirs for these boys who are most responsive to the challenge of Christian decision?

This, to use Gilkey's phrase, is the period of transition between the time of the "inherited" and the "personal" creed. The boy here strictly observes Paul's injunction, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Everything must stand the test of his own judgment.

This is particularly true of the later years in this grade. As the boy approaches eighteen, he reaches not infrequently a period of genuine—and shall I say wholesome?—doubt. I should not hesitate to use the word "wholesome" if I were sure of the leadership he would have during these doubting years. If he can be led by one who has himself doubted, but has found a firm foundation for his convictions, I have little fear for this boy.

If, however, as is too often the case where the boy leaves home and is thrown among strangers, his leadership comes from those whose doubts have left them with no certain beliefs, he is in grave danger.

How this phase of his life shall be met in the hours of Bible-teaching will be discussed in a later chapter. The fact that the teacher's influence upon the boy's life at this time of real danger is going to extend far beyond the teaching hour should be especially emphasized here. As a teacher, you will influence this boy by what you believe and how you live out your belief; what you teach is of secondary importance. What you teach may be either emphasized or nullified by what you believe and how you live.

It is everlastingly true that this is no time for vacillation and uncertainty. It is a time for positive teaching—but not dogmatic teaching. "I say this; therefore it is true" has no place here. "I believe this; you may believe it or not as your judgment dictates" may be the keynote for the best work. Class organization and other machinery in this period is important; but it is absolutely secondary to the whole question of right personality in leadership. Preferably the teacher should be a man. An excellent woman teacher may be better than a poor man teacher; but, other things being fairly equal, the man is always to be preferred. The physiological changes in the boy's life give the man opportunities for helpfulness which rarely come to a woman. The wise man will more quickly discover the

varying needs of the boy; and the boy greatly admires a man who is in sympathetic touch with his life.

The Senior boy, then, is a creature of ever-changing moods and needs. He is a puzzle to himself and to others. He is lost to the day school, to the Bible school, to the home and parent, more frequently in this period than in any other. He may keep his physical residence in his home but he is often "lost" to home and people in a very essential sense although he lives among them. When the charge is made against the Bible school that it fails to hold these boys it will be well to remember that these other institutions likewise fail in many cases. To know that others fail also does not make the task any easier, but it throws light on the problem.

If this is the real storm period of the boy's life it is equally the testing period of the Church contact with him. Just at this moment the Church is failing to grip this boy in any adequate way. But better times are coming. Here and there a church has aroused itself and has taken hold of this boy's life through adequate Bible-school leadership. This proves that it can be done, and the number of churches which do it will increase. The understanding of the boy himself is the first essential. The earnest leader who makes a study of any book on this topic has therefore begun, at least, to solve the difficult problem.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. How does the Senior period differ from the Intermediate period just preceding and from the Young-People's period following?
2. How do physiological changes affect the boy's life?
3. Why is the boy sometimes said to be "impossible"?
4. Between what two extremes does he waver in his social interests?
5. What bearing does this period have upon the question of Christian decision?
6. What preventive is there for the entrance of disquieting doubt into his life?
7. What reasoning suggests a man teacher for this period?

For further reading: "Adolescent Boyhood," by H. M. Burr. (Association Press. \$1.00 net.)

II

Outside Contacts

"Curious title for a chapter in this book," ventures some one. Perhaps not; let us see.

Who is this Senior boy? What are the elements in his make-up with which I have to deal? To what extent do the daily contacts of his life influence the character processes? The answer to these questions is the justification for this chapter.

The boy's home is a mighty factor; the teacher cannot be a vital force in this boy's life until he knows something of his home. His parents—are they Christians? The home life—is it wholesome? Are honor and integrity taught? Is respect for authority found there? All these things make for character content; how thoroughly are they taught in the home? What are the home standards? Are they above or below the standards of the neighborhood in which the home is situated? How do they compare with the standards of other neighborhoods?

Two boys sit in my class. One comes from a neighborhood where stealing is fairly common; the standard is not to get caught stealing. Another comes from a neighborhood where stealing is looked upon as particularly vicious. Is it not clear that I must know the background of these boys' lives before I can successfully teach a lesson on honesty to my class?

What is the boy's relationship to his school life or his work? If at school, where is he, and in what grade? Are the personal contacts with teachers at his school helpful or colorless or positively pernicious? Happily most of the teachers in our schools exert wholly helpful influences on the lives of our children; but here and there is found a teacher whose influence is seriously in the other direction.

At school what studies does this boy like and dislike? And why? Perhaps I can help him. Perhaps, too, his likes and dislikes will give me a cue to his life course—and this, as will be shown in another chapter, is no mean item.

If the boy is at work, where is he and what is he doing? And, even more important, what is ahead of him? Has he a blind-alley job, or a position with a future? What are the moral influences of his surroundings eight, nine, or ten hours a day?

What about his earnings? Here enters the whole moral problem of thrift. It will take some tact to enter into the question of how this money is saved or spent; but I can do it, if I am in the right relation to him. His leisure-time occupations, dependent to some extent on his free money, are of mighty concern to me.

Who are this boy's friends? In a dormitory for boys without homes in a certain great city there was one sure way to get an index to a new boy's character. As he entered the dormitory he quickly found a place in one of two or three fairly well-defined groups. A week of observation showed pretty clearly toward which group he naturally tended. This was a key to his character.

So with this boy in my class. Perhaps my shortest cut to knowing him is to know something about his friends. This may be difficult, and seemingly a slow process. Ordinarily, it can be quite easily accomplished. There are many ways by which a boy may be encouraged to bring his teacher into contact with his friends—unless, perchance, he is conscious of not being very proud of some of his friendships. But the teacher must know the boy's friends as quickly as possible, both for the sake of the boy and with a view to knowing the boy better.

It is wise to learn something about the boy's taste in reading. Perhaps his reading habits are not clearly formed; or perhaps his choice of books is not wholesome. Next to the value of knowing his friends in the flesh comes the value of knowing his book friendships. I can quote from a choice book in my class and leave the story unfinished. If a boy asks where he can get that book, I have a key to his reading tastes. At another time I sound the class on a problem in science or invention; the boys who follow popular science in their reading will show interest at once. It is comparatively easy to tabulate the reading tastes of a class of boys without advertising the fact that one is doing it.

What are the influences of his school life? Does he belong to a school society? Is it helpful or hurtful? How does he grade? If he grades low, why?

What other influences impinge upon him? Life is tremendously complex. The boy of to-day is thrown into a vortex of conflicting interests and influences

which is appalling. Do I know, as his teacher, what these interests and influences are and how to place values on them? Do I know which I can call on for aid and which I must combat in the effort I am making for character construction in this boy's life?

To be a Bible-class leader demands more than a knowledge of the Bible, a knowledge of how to teach a lesson, and a knowledge of boyhood. The teacher must know, personally and individually, intimately, minutely, sympathetically, each boy of the six or seven or ten who constitute his class. And each boy must know the teacher.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. How may home influences affect the contacts I have with a boy in the Bible class?
2. Suggest two different types of homes and describe the way in which each affects boy life.
3. How do neighborhood standards play a part in determining character?
4. What elements in school life may have a vital part in shaping the boy's attitude toward life?
5. What moral elements are involved in the problem of thrift?
6. What should a teacher know about the life of an employed boy?
7. How would you deal with the question of unwholesome friendships?
8. Suggest three ways in which a boy's reading may be guided.

For further reading: "Boy Life and Self-Government," by G. Walter Fiske. (Association Press. \$1.00 net.)

III

Class Organization

If there is reason that the Intermediate class should be organized, as is generally recognized, there is even greater reason that the Senior class should be organized. But the Senior class may not be organized in quite the same way as the class below or the class above.

There are certain well-defined principles of organization. In the Intermediate period, the teacher had to assume open leadership; in the period beyond the Senior, the teacher should be found "leading from the rear." It is evident that here, again, these Senior boys are to be found in the period of transition. So it must be with the teacher; to-day he will be the manifest leader, as he has previously been. To-morrow he will surrender this leadership to a promising boy; if it works well he will surrender more. Then some day he will discover that he has let go too far, that leadership of the adult kind is again needed. But by this very process he will gradually develop trustworthy leadership among the boys themselves. Toward the end of the Senior period he should be able to leave much of the leadership to his pupils. His task is to develop responsibility in these boys as he lives with them through three Senior years.

There are those who think that a class is "organized" when an election has been held and officers have been

elected and committees appointed. Technically that may be true; but the only really organized class is the class that works, that proves by its results that it is a better class than a class which is not organized.

For officers and committees a six months' term of office seems more satisfactory. Election of officers in September and March may be desirable; in some cases January and July may work out all right. Climatic conditions will be a determining factor. This is assuming that the class will hold actively to its organization through all the twelve months of the year. The summer months for the city class and the midwinter months for the class in the open country need not cause an absolute cessation of real work if the teacher is in earnest.

But officers and committees are elected for what purpose, with what end in view? What is the program? How does the class organization express itself? These are the test questions.

If the class below this in age is self-centered and the class above it is other-centered, then will this Senior class again be a mixture of the two. The program must provide amply for both, the boy who thinks mostly of himself and of his class and for the same boy who begins to have yearnings to serve others. A difficult program? Yes, quite so. This is the most difficult age group of them all. Such a program is discussed in Chapter V.

The committees should be many, but of two main kinds: (a) Those devoted to the interests of the class itself; and (b) those devoted to the interests of others outside the class.

There are those who would give the organized class in this group the privilege of electing its own teacher. This does work out successfully sometimes. Usually it would result in many mistakes. The selection of a teacher should be in more experienced hands. Does the school board place in the hands of pupils of the Senior high schools the selection of the teachers within the schools? It would be more incongruous than that such choice should be referred to a class of fifteen- to seventeen-year-old boys.

The organized class will have its regular meetings, possibly once a week or once in two weeks; occasionally, though this is not usually best, but once a month. Enthusiasm may suggest that the class meet more than once a week, outside of the Sunday hour. Generally, if not invariably, this would be a mistake.

The class may properly have a name—a dignified name. Avoid names that may suggest children's groups, or names that lack virility. Ordinarily it is better not to name the class after the teacher. If a person's name is taken it is always safer to take the name of one who is dead—he can make no mistakes to cause embarrassment to the class.

The organized Senior class should recognize itself as a part of the whole school. "The part is not greater than the whole," yet there have been organized classes which carried themselves as if they thought they were greater than the school. Loyalty to the teacher and loyalty to the class on the part of each pupil is necessary; but all this must be bound up in loyalty to

the institution as such—otherwise the class were better not organized.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. Why should the class be organized?
2. What differences should exist between this class organization and that of an intermediate group?
3. When may a class be said to be "organized"?
4. What tests may be applied to determine the adequacy of a program for an organized class?
5. What two types of committees should there be?
6. Suggest arguments for and against the selection of a teacher by the boys themselves.
7. How may class spirit help to maintain school spirit?

For further reading: Leaflets Nos. 2 and 4, International Sunday-School Association.

IV

The Class Hour

At the time of the lesson hour the boys of Senior classes range all the way from the point of intense interest and reverent attention to the other extreme of disorder and distraction for themselves and for others. It is a problem indeed when these older boys become a disorderly group. But what are the reasons for this wide variation?

In the first place it must be recognized that these boys may be in just as turbulent a state of mind during the thirty minutes of the class hour as they are during the other hours of the day and days of the week. It is agreed that the boy is at a turbulent stage of life, that his whole being is in a state of commotion. This may manifest itself in the class hour as well as at any other time.

Before entering upon further discussion of this matter, however, one suggestion should be made. To some extent, this state of mind of the boy may be safeguarded by the general exercises of the school which precede the lesson hour. Of tremendous importance are these general exercises as a preparation for lesson study. Superintendents who slight this part of their work, who come in to the desk wholly unprepared for this important function, cannot keenly perceive the real values of these critical minutes of the opening exercises. Very

often the older boys do not come to the opening exercises of the school. Why should they make an effort to be present at exercises which are evidently of last-minute, thrown-together variety and which are even then keyed to the younger child rather than to an older average? The capable teacher of a Senior class of boys often suffers from the inefficiency or laziness of a superintendent who fails to rise to the possibilities of the opening hour.

As to the lesson period itself, the need of a classroom or its nearest possible equivalent is great. The Senior class should be a discussion group, and it is impossible to have satisfactory discussion in a group where countless distractions appeal to both eye and ear. If the separate classroom is not to be had, a set of screens, or a curtained frame, may be used; this will shut out the most serious annoyance, the appeal to the eye; with practice it may be possible to work in the presence of extraneous sounds, if the sights are shut out.

It is essential to have discussion. The Senior class will not usually be successful for any length of time if the leader is a preacher rather than a teacher. The class session is certainly not the place for preaching; teaching may have in it a good deal of direct presentation by the teacher, but the "come back" of the pupils must be secured. This is especially necessary in this age group and in those which immediately follow. These are the disputatious stages of life. The boy has questions and convictions. The teacher may avoid letting him give expression to these, for purposes of his own convenience or even safety, but he will not ac-

comply with the best teaching work by so doing. On the other hand he must guide this discussion and not let it run away with the class or with the lesson plan which he has carefully made—unless it becomes evident that this element of discussion offers a better opportunity to present the great truth than the prepared plan.

Is there any period of the boy's life which calls for more experience in teaching than this? Is it not clear that responsible Church leaders should select their best material for this teaching work? This Senior teacher must be ready for any turn which the class hour takes.

"Shall we encourage questions which are marked with irreverence?" asks some one. What is meant by the use of the word "irreverence" in this case? If the boy questions a statement made as a matter of course, a statement of belief long accepted by the teacher, is that irreverence? Not necessarily. It may be honest inquiry; if it is, woe be to that teacher who stifles it! By this very squelching process has many a boy been sent from the school, alienated from the Church, and lost to the Kingdom. One must be cautious, therefore, about designating any attitude of the Senior boy as irreverent. Even though it is clearly irreverent it may be an attitude used to cover up the boy's real interest. The writer remembers with great distinctness that, when he was a boy of fifteen, his teacher pressed a question pretty close home to him one day in class. He was deeply touched; but he did not wish to betray his feeling to the other boys. He answered in a flippant and irreverent manner. The teacher was clearly hurt, but

he had the good sense not to make an issue of it. His wise attitude did a great deal to bring the boy later to a right relation to Christ.

The lesson hour should be rich in variety. Routine and repetition are repellent to this boy. He is breaking away from the usual into the realm of adventure in every walk of his life; he is equally ready for the unusual here—not the spectacular, but the new.

Everything that can be done to secure free expression is worth while considering; it may not all be used. The lesson study of to-day should be tied up to the experience of the week that is past, and should be prophetic of the week to come. These boys live intensely in the present. A fact is of interest to the extent that it sheds light on the present; the historical for its own sake is not usually revered.

These boys are beginning to feel the call of altruism; they are getting ready to assume a disproportionate share of the burden of world needs. Only a little while and many a boy of this age is going to believe sincerely that he can solve any problem which has baffled others if he is given half a chance. Shall he be discouraged, or shall he be guided? Is the answer to this question a suggestion as to methods of lesson presentation? The teacher must make the class hour the place where this boy unconsciously may be guided.

Is it possible to secure fairly regular attendance among boys of this age? Assuredly, it is possible. But dependence may not be placed on parental authority, which may be fairly efficacious at earlier times. Paren-

tal influence, especially on the father's side, is much more potent. But for many boys there is no helpful home influence. Is it possible to get these boys? Many schools do get them. There must be strong personality on the part of the teacher, and this should be supplemented by adequate class organization and avenues for adequate expression.

The class hour is but one of the places of contact between teacher and boy. Whether the other contacts are vital or not will depend greatly upon the sincerity and the aptness of the lesson presentation.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What effects, for helpfulness or hindrance, may the opening exercises of the school or department have upon the lesson period?

2. How would you improve opening exercises which are not helpful?

3. What are the advantages of a separate classroom? Where a classroom cannot be had what substitutes are available?

4. Why is discussion on the part of the class better than a clear, forceful presentation of the entire lesson by the teacher?

5. How may discussion become harmful rather than helpful?

6. What is your definition of "irreverence"?

7. How may the lesson period be varied?

8. What is meant by the statement: "There can be no impression without expression"?

For further reading: "The Point of Contact in Teaching," by Paterson Du Bois. (Dodd, Mead & Co., \$.75 net.)

A Through the Week Program

A widowed mother patted her sixteen-year-old boy on the back as she said: "He and I are chums, and I am sure it always will be so. He never goes anywhere without me, and we shall continue to be together." That mother must some time awaken to a new realization.

The boy in this period must enlarge his social contacts; he cannot help doing so. It is in this process of widening his sphere of companionship and interests that he needs guidance. The Bible-school hour on Sunday will usually need to be supplemented by through-the-week activity to help him to make his new adjustments safely.

There should be for each organized class a between-Sundays program. The active boy will have such a program, and it will almost always be one of group activity. Such a group needs the adult leadership which wise Bible-class organization should supply.

What shall the program be? One might well test a proposed program by three questions:

1. Is the program progressive? Does it allow the boy to grow? Some programs admirably adapted for younger boys fail right here: There is no chance for the boy to grow within the program and to grow rapidly.

2. Is the program an all-round program? Does it provide for the growth of the boy along all sides of his nature? There are most excellent programs which are wholly directed to spiritual growth, or wholly devoted to physical activities. All these are alike failures. No matter how skillful a boy may become in woodcraft or military training or athletics, if the program makes no adequate provision for his spiritual growth, it should have no place in a plan of religious education.
3. Is the program character-building in its contacts? Does it inculcate habits of punctuality, obedience, reverence, the proper assumption of responsibility? A boy may wear the insignia of advanced work of one of the popular boy organizations of the day and yet be unworthy to be trusted out of sight. Of what avail are all his attainments and his honors and pseudochevrons when the innermost traits of character are not touched?

If the program in question passes these tests, it is worthy of consideration. A program which fails in any one of these particulars is not worthy of a Bible-class organization.

It must be remembered that the interests of these boys are still largely physical. Hence athletics will need to have a real place in the activity program of this class. Interclass and interschool games should be encouraged, provided they may be held under suitable conditions. Untold damage has been done by the indiscriminate making of game schedules which take boys to places of unsavory character or into contact with other boys

who are unclean in their actions and speech. On the other hand, if the game is properly officered by adults, and the place carefully chosen, it may frequently be possible to bring other teams of less fortunate boys to meet your boys. I do not plead that these Bible-school boys in their athletics should be "sheltered" from others of unlike tastes. But I do insist that the supervision and the place of play shall tend toward decency rather than away from it.

"All unnecessary caution," some one suggests. Not when it is possible to cite cases where a Bible-class team of boys of this age has played basket ball on a floor which is an adjunct of a low saloon, and that without even an older person from the Bible school present; when two Bible teams, playing on the floor of a church gymnasium without any adult leaders present, came to profanity and blows. Every date for an athletic contest for the representative team of the class should be accepted in open meeting and should have the teacher's approval, together with the presence of a responsible adult when the game is played.

The boys of this period are leaning strongly toward association with girls. The opportunity to build up the social life of boys and girls together should therefore be recognized. In this period the "stag" affair gets to be a bore if often repeated. A little variation which will provide girl and boy activities under good auspices will be wholesome.

This is the time when the break away from school is much too common. The program should provide for

mental stimulus and growth. The meetings of the group should tend to interest the boys in intellectual values. Good reading, poetry, music, art—all will help. It is a poor program which makes no provision for culture in its finest sense.

As to spiritual growth, this age spells opportunity in large letters. A part of the program, accepted by all, should bring a definite challenge to the spiritual impulses. As the age of decision comes in this period, a wisely planned program will make place for the decision impulse to find natural expression.

The writer knows of but one program for boys of this age which has been constructed with all these requirements in view. It is the American Standard Program, issued by the International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, and available for general use. This program is constructed with the purpose of bringing each boy up to the plane of a balanced life. It avoids overemphasizing any phase of growth. It seeks to produce symmetry. In such a program the development of the spiritual life goes along with the development of the physical or social life. This program provides an ingenious "charting" scheme for boys of this age. The charting of a boy is essentially a directed personal interview in which all the boy's life interests are passed in review. The wise leader will use this interview frequently as the means to encourage the boy to express his decision for the Christian life. The organized class of boys, enrolled with its denominational agency, is usually ready for a program of this

character, and the American Standard Program or its equivalent must be used to supply the program need of the group.

Who shall say what part of the teacher's work will be done between Sundays? Will it be ninety per cent? Sometimes it will be. Not that the activities between Sundays can ever take the place of the Sunday Bible hour. Each type of work is needed in its place; neither can succeed without the other.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by "widen social contacts"?
2. Why should the Bible-class leader feel a responsibility for the new social contacts which the boy is making?
3. How may a Bible-class program function in the between-Sundays activities of boy life?
4. What tests will prove such a program adequate?
5. Why should a good deal of emphasis be placed upon the physical side of a program?
6. What attitude should we take toward the boy's associations with girls?
7. How may we help to keep the boy in school?
8. To what extent should the spiritual growth of the boy be considered in framing such a program?

For further reading: Any book or pamphlet published by the denomination on the organized Bible class and its program.

For examination: "The American Standard Program." (Association Press.)

VI

Some Special Problems

Each chapter of this book discusses a problem arising out of the leadership of Senior boys. But under the general head of this chapter a few questions which arise from time to time, may be discussed more briefly than under separate chapter designations.

1. **Sex Instruction.** The boy in this period is passing through the period of change called puberty, or has recently passed through it. The question of personal purity of life in his social contacts with girls may become a very real puzzle in the later years of this group. How shall this need of the Senior boy be met? Certainly not by dodging the issue. Here a man teacher will be most valuable, a woman teacher most perplexed, as to what to do.

The force of personal example is tremendous. The man whose own life is right will be a powerful example to the boy. A frank attitude toward sex matters, whenever they come up, will be helpful. A fine relation of comradeship between man and boy will, perhaps, count more than anything else. The teacher who can, not more than once or twice, talk helpfully with the boy about these problems will be a mighty factor at this critical time.

2. **Irresponsibility.** "My boys will not take responsibility. They agree to do something, and then

utterly neglect it. They are never on time. I cannot rely on them." So runs the plaint of many a teacher, with all truthfulness, with reference to this particular group. Shall the teacher throw up his hands and say that it is useless to try to correct it? Not if he believes in boys and in his message to boys. It will not solve the problem to say that these boys have all around them, in their elders, examples of this same unwillingness to meet responsibility. This makes the task with the boy harder, but it gives no excuse to let him go without help.

There are certain aids to the solution of this problem. First, the teacher should be very cautious as to how he assigns responsibilities. They should be few, and very definite. The teacher should be considerate. If a boy is overloaded with school or home duties, he should gauge assignments carefully. If the biggest game of the season is three days off, it may be well to refrain from any assignment or appointment until that excitement is over. A request for something to be done or an appointment to be met should be clearly and definitely stated. There should be no uncertainty as to what is wanted. If the boy accepts the assignment, he should know that his leader fully expects him to live up to it. "Harry," said a teacher, "our meeting next Wednesday will be at eight, but I suppose you will come strolling in at eight-thirty." This was a poor way to develop promptness.

When a boy shows signs of lacking the sense of responsibility he should be carefully guided into a better way. This will come through a friendly, personal touch. Sometimes he may need a shock. A class meeting is to

be held, and all agree to be there. It may be well once in a while to have at the moment of beginning a genuine surprise of great interest. Say nothing in advance about it; let the absentee miss what the others receive.

The leader must see through every assignment accepted. To let the boy lapse and have no occasion for regret is bad for the boy.

The leader should keep his own appointments scrupulously. To promise such and such a thing in connection with next Sunday's lesson, or to be five minutes late at class or at an appointment without satisfactory explanation, is to pave the way for lack of a sense of responsibility on the part of boys. This is the careless school in which so many have been trained; our task, by precept and example, is to give them more constructive leadership.

These boys should be given responsibilities beyond their years rather than those which belong to the younger group. They are emerging into the altruistic areas of life; they should be offered man-size service tasks.

3. The Indifferent Home. We can frequently do more with a boy from a non-Christian home than with a lad from a home which is professedly Christian but indifferent to the boy's greatest needs. Both the boy and his teacher may be conscious of the lack in his home, but they cannot talk about it. All the teacher can do is to let the power of his own example speak as loudly as it will and to strive to inculcate higher ideals. If there is drinking in a home, or other unwholesome

example, the teacher should be careful to distinguish between condemnation of sin and of the sinner. It is not right to impale a boy before his fellows and torture him by condemnation of all who drink, if his father is a drinking man. Though the teacher hates that sin with all his heart, there need be no unkind thought of the man who errs.

The teacher has no right to lower the ideals placed before his boys because a boy's home is lacking in good example. But he can teach the great lessons of life in a way that will assure the boy that he still respects his parents because they are his parents. Many a boy who has been wisely led under these circumstances has later become the very saviour of his own home. There is always that possibility.

4. **Disrespect.** This may be toward parents, or teachers, or others in authority, or to the Church and even to God. It is frequently found in this period. It need not be serious; or it may become so.

Frequently such outward disrespect is a cloak to hide real feelings. Perhaps this is true more often than is realized. Such disrespect, while not passed by with approval, need not be taken very seriously. Frequently, again, such outward disrespect is shown in order to shock the teacher or parent; in this case utter disregard of it is a fine corrective. Why shock anyone who refuses to be shocked? The fun is all gone from the game.

The least said about disrespect before others the better. The quiet talk will do more to correct this

tendency than anything else. But the quiet talk is possible between man and boy only when there has been established a bond of sympathy. There must be a quiet word at the right time, and ever-deepening bonds of friendship.

5. Lack of Interest. This problem is as old as time. The boy who sits before me in class is interested in his to-day; I am interested in his to-morrow. It will take all the skill I have to give him my point of view, all the patience I have to put up so long with his point of view. He is interested, now and here, in the things which appeal to his present life. I present to him some Bible teaching, a story from the long ago, where men, unreal to him, walk back and forth over the stage of action. I may try to inculcate an abstract principle; he thinks only in terms of the concrete.

When the problem has been stated in this way it must be evident that the solution lies in the teacher's hands. The boy will be interested (*a*) in that in which I am interested, if he thinks a good deal of me; (*b*) in that which I make real to him and connect up with his daily life; (*c*) in that which reflects his own experience, and which he is thus able to identify with his own life problem; (*d*) in things which have in them action, for he is a creature of action.

If the boy lacks interest, it is the teacher's fault, not his. This, therefore, is a matter capable of correction.

6. The Know-It-All Stage. This ailment, often painless to the patient but extraordinarily trying to those about him, is well-nigh universal in the Senior age, and

later. It is the cause of much misunderstanding and heartache. There is no cure for it but time. The condition feeds on opposition; hence, the less the opposition the quicker the cure. This does not mean that every extravagant statement made by a boy at this age must be accepted in silence; but many statements are about nonessentials, and these may be passed by quietly in order to avoid argument. An erroneous statement, where facts are easily obtainable to disprove it, may be made the occasion for a quiet admonition, without witnesses, to be careful of statement in the future.

A teacher may not distinctly remember it, but he also has passed through this stage at one time. Surely the realization of this fact should lead him to be very patient and sympathetic with the boys who must needs go that way while he looks on and sees how foolishly they carry their autoknowledge. "Is he a replica of me in my own boyhood? And was somebody supremely patient with me?" These are suggestive questions for the teacher to ask of himself.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What is the best way in which to help a boy in this period in matters of sex instruction?
2. Suggest three ways in which boys may be helped to assume responsibility?
3. In what way does the teacher indirectly teach the importance of responsibility?
4. How may I teach boys higher ideals than those which exist in the home, without doing harm to proper home influence?
5. What is the best cure for persistent disrespect?

6. Why is disrespect more common in this period than either earlier or later?

7. Take three boys you know who are passing through the lack-of-interest stage and tell in each case what is the cause.

8. Suggest two ways in which to meet the boy in the know-it-all period.

For further reading: "Problems of the Intermediate and Senior Teachers," by Eugene C. Foster. (Westminster Press. \$.40 net.)

VII

Boy and Girl Relationships

How many teachers hold up their hands in despair when this subject is broached: Here for some is a problem seemingly beyond solution. It is a problem, to be sure. But there are many elements in it which are far from being impossible of solution.

In the first place it is well to recognize the fact that the attraction between boys and girls in this age group is normal. It does not come with equal intensity in all cases, nor at a uniform age. One boy or girl may pass almost through the period without much manifestation of this attraction, while another boy or girl may develop it at a very early time. It is a normal development, however, and the young folks who do not show its signs by sixteen or seventeen are rather unusual. With such a normal development, then, the teacher must faithfully deal.

The relationships between girls and boys should be open and frank. A great deal of the unwholesome will be avoided if the social contacts are out in the open, rather than concealed. Anything that tends toward driving these relationships to concealment must be challenged. Scolding by parents or others because a boy is interested in girls, or a girl in boys, frequently relegates these interests to the basis of the clandestine. Sarcastic remarks or teasing will usually prove to be

equally mischievous. That which needs secrecy is almost sure to be unwholesome; that which will eagerly welcome the light of day, the open eye of observation, will probably prove to be right.

Here is an immediate lesson for the Bible-school teacher. Are your boys manifestly interested in girls? Hail it with sincere delight. Let the boys know that you, too, are truly interested. Welcome the confidences which may come to you. All this is a healthy sign. The same suggestion applies to a teacher of a class of girls.

Are there not dangers here, then? Yes, many. It is because there are dangers that the pupils need the teacher's counseling presence. But counsel will not continue to be a privilege if the teacher is faultfinding and evidently suspicious. The very air of frankness all around is the first essential to the solution of these problems.

There are those who view with open suspicion every evidence that the boys and girls are getting interested in each other at this time. "Too young," they say. It may be unfair and irrelevant to press an inquiry as to the age at which these same critics manifested like tendencies; and many of them appear to have survived without serious loss. The real fact is, however, that these interests are normal, and we should hesitate to charge nature with mistakes.

The most helpful element in the situation is present when we can retain these boy and girl relationships on an impersonal basis. When the boys seek the companionship of the girls in groups the tendency is almost

always right and safe. The greatest harm is likely to result from too early "pairing off." In this matter adults are much to blame. Social affairs are set up where the very plan involves this pairing-off process. Many times these young people would be wholly content to get their social life in the group atmosphere, did not adult planning suggest another course.

It is a bit disheartening when the sixteen-year-old boy makes a "date" with the fifteen-year-old girl, neither parent being consulted, and calls for her in his father's machiné or a hired taxicab and takes her to the theater or a dance. Is this a fancy picture? Not at all. It is from real life, and is not taken from any extreme social circle but rather from the ordinary walks of life.

Such social customs are entirely out of place at fifteen or sixteen. The social customs of young men and young women should not be aped by boys and girls. Then, too, there are fictitious elements in it all. Values are badly rated; unimportant things are made to appear important. This is not good for the lives of our young people. Beyond this is the element of unwise expenditure. In many cases these social affairs are quite beyond the legitimate means of the young people concerned. These are but a few of the considerations which should cause anxiety.

Parents, and not infrequently high-school authorities, are to blame. People who know better are to blame, for they allow their sons and daughters to set the example for those who do not know better. The Bible-school teacher must often face this problem in the full

knowledge that other adults, close to these young people, are really responsible. It is a difficult situation. The best solution is apt to come when the teacher is wise and painstaking enough to show, little by little, that general social gatherings, with real comradeship among all present, furnish more genuine fun, after all, than the exclusive two-by-two arrangement.

This is not asking for the impossible. Certainly this particular boy has a right to find a prime attraction in that particular girl. It is nature's way again. But opposition to this mutual attraction is usually the best way to increase it. Reasonable persuasion, with good sense in it all, may win a point for the adult view; unreasonable opposition is likely to result in a way opposite to that intended.

A mother repeatedly took a girl's photograph off her son's bureau, and placed it elsewhere, out of sight. The photograph always promptly found its way back to the bureau. No words passed; but the son and the girl are married now, and it was a pretty good match, after all. The mother was wrong, and did wrong.

If a mutual attraction between two is inevitable, happy is that teacher who holds his or her place of counsel through it all. If these young people continue to share their joys and sorrows with parents or teachers there need be little fear for the outcome.

The teacher should everlastingly inculcate in the boys respect for the girls, and in the girls respect for the boys. He should teach chivalry, as knightly as can be and Christian with it all. That these boys and girls

shall be Christian ladies and gentlemen is the teacher's greatest hope.

There are many courtesies, now all but obsolete, which the Bible-school teacher should seek to have adopted by the young people. It is not a trifling gallantry that a boy shall automatically arise when a girl or a woman enters the room where he is sitting, or proffer his seat in a car to a woman who enters. It has in it the merit of basic respect which will make it harder for him to offer any woman discourtesy or dishonor. A girl who is careful about her bearing in the presence of a boy, or who shows the fine womanly graces which save her from familiarity, is on the way to a womanhood which all men can respect.

The teacher, then, should encourage social contacts between boys and girls, guiding them to association in groups rather than by pairs.

He should study with care his own attitude as a man toward women. He should expect these young people to learn more from what he does than from what he says. He should be instantly alert to respond to confidences brought to him by his young people—never scolding, never making fun to the point of unpleasantness, never showing suspicion. He should aim frankly to counsel, and pray that his counsel may be of the kind that will prove welcome.

He should invent social activities that will emphasize the best there is in this realm. He should tempt from the cheaper with better things. He should seek to cultivate taste, to mold desires, rather than to enforce

prohibitory laws. He should seek to inculcate principles rather than to lay down rules.

Above all, he should recognize the social life of his pupils, and especially the mutual attraction of sex, as not only God-given, but as offering, in many ways, his best possible opportunity to drive home his best teaching in other realms of thought. He should seek to win these young people through sympathetic understanding of their problems, instead of driving them away by inexorable prohibitions.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. Why is attraction between boys and girls of this age accepted as normal?

2. Why is open relationship between boy and girl preferable to secret relationships?

3. Does the element of concealment, even in wholly acceptable relationships, add to zest and interest? How may we meet this?

4. How can pairing off at this age be substituted by general social contacts in which more than two are involved?

5. What is the best relationship of a teacher to a situation where mutual attraction develops in a marked degree?

6. How may seemingly trifling courtesies have an influence in establishing right attitudes toward girls?

7. How may a teacher deal successfully with confidences?

8. What is the difference between inculcating principles and laying down rules of conduct?

For further reading: "Girl and Her Religion," by Margaret Slattery. (The Pilgrim Press. \$1.00 net.) "The American Girl and Her Community," by Margaret Slattery. (The Pilgrim Press. \$1.25 net.)

VIII

The Life Work Challenge

For a long time it has been the custom of many who are seeking to secure young men to enter certain forms of life work to look for these young men among those who are about to be graduated from college. A little reflection must have shown long ago that many a decision as to life work is made a great while before college graduation; frequently it is made before entering college, and the college course is selected in the light of this decision. Is it not possible that many a final decision is reached in the high-school days? If so, the Senior boys in our classes may be right at the point of this decision, for the age average is that of the upper high-school grades.

Great care is needed in dealing with this situation. There are many who believe that the choice of a vocation should not be finally made at so early a period. That many do make such final choices at this period remains true. There is good reason for caution lest too much stress be laid upon this major decision at a time when the boy is not ready, and should not be called on, to make it. All this seems contradictory.

In the first place, certain broad decisions may safely be made much earlier in life than certain other decisions leading to specific choice. A boy may decide to enter the mercantile world rather than the professions, basing

his choice on known tastes and talents. Such a decision may be encouraged earlier than the decision, let us say, as to which profession or which branch of mercantile work to enter.

Shall these boys be challenged to enter whole-time Christian callings—the ministry, at home or abroad, the medical missionary field, the Young Men's Christian Association secretaryship? This is a sharp problem with many. It would be comparatively easy to sweep a number of boys, by special pleading, into decisions for such life work. Is it wise?

The suggestion which appeals most strongly to many is that every boy who is trained under Christian direction should hold an open mind about entering whole-time Christian work. To this end, discussions on life work should proceed with an even emphasis on all phases of work; too often the Christian ministry, for instance, is left out of the general discussion with the thought that this subject should be reserved for a favored one or two who are thought by some adult to be specially suited for this profession.

The boy of fifteen to seventeen should have a fair deal—fair in the sense that he shall have equal chance to dedicate himself as a Christian business or professional man or as a Christian minister or other full-time Christian worker. The business and professional careers have been glorified without limit; let the boy see the glory in other careers as well.

But it is not wise to teach that the Christian ministry is sacred and the business or professional life secular.

The teacher should glorify the dedicated life wherever found. The writer can never forget the storm of protest which rose in his soul when certain help needed in seeking an education was denied because, forsooth, he was not a theological student. It nearly cost him his religious balance. The man who could help would help a theological student; but a student of science?—it was not to be considered. When the young man recovered from the blow he resolved that he, a mere chemist, would yield his devotion to the Christian cause to no one, even though he be a theologian.

Whether a boy seeks to be a merchant or an engineer or a Christian minister, there can be no greater boon bestowed upon him than the realization that his work should first seek other rewards than money; that money is an incident, not an end. If the teacher can get a boy to lay his life course by the chart of service, letting money come as it will and to all good ends, it is an achievement; whether the boy will then choose to do one thing or the other becomes of secondary rather than of primary importance. "Not self but service" is the motto of a great organization. Is it a good motto for this Senior boy?

There is a place in group discussion for the life work topic. Overdone, it becomes a bore. To let it enter naturally into any discussion at any point is better. To be prepared, when it does come up, to leave guiding principles with the boys should be the teacher's aim. Each boy will develop along individual lines. Each boy is apt to betray his tendencies in a way different

from others. One will know early what he is going to do, and will change two or three times in as many years. Another will know, and will stick to his decision. Still another will defer his decision, sometimes until very late. Forcing a decision is not usually, if ever, good. Opening the way for a natural decision is quite the best course.

There are many indirect ways to help boys to reach their decisions. The average boy knows little beyond a certain groove of life. Agricultural, stock-raising, or dairy industries may be investigated; great factories or mercantile houses, when they are near, may be visited; tasks of professional men may be studied at close range; men at work in service tasks may be called upon to yield up the secrets of the urge that is upon them.

Too long has the lure of success been held up to our boys, defined only in terms of money or power and their purchasing values. We do that boy violence to whom we fail to open up the horizon of the world where others loom larger than self.

Biographies are helpful in this choice-making time. Benjamin Franklin has always been a great man to growing boys; I wonder how many have become printers because Franklin was a printer? It is well to bring the lives of many men of many tastes and accomplishments in review before these boys.

The whole book world plays its part here. There are many vocational books, some of which the leader of the group should read before passing them on to his boys. All of the best of these are available in a public library, but the adult leader of the group may find it valuable to have a few titles in his own possession.

But the force of the living personality which fills the near foreground will play a large part in many a decision. If the minister the boy knows best is virile and appealing, the way to the ministry may be very inviting. If the richest man in town is a merchant, and is at the same time an acceptable leader of men, the appeal there will be strong. Many a boy leans toward the law because some law-trained man is outstanding in the community.

The Senior age is, indeed, a time of great decisions. To be blind to these that are being made while the pathways of teachers and pupils cross and recross is beyond excuse.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What broad decisions as to life work may be made safely by a boy at this age?
2. To what extent may these boys be challenged to enter whole-time Christian callings?
3. What is meant by a "fair deal" for the boy in reference to whole-time Christian callings?
4. To what extent is one calling more "sacred" than another?
5. How may we inculcate desires for rewards other than money?
6. How may life-work discussion be overdone?
7. How may we use books to help boys at this point?
8. How do near-by personalities play a great part in the boy's decision?

For further reading: The author's book "Making Life Count," intended for boys and girls of this age, should also be read by the teacher. (Any denominational publishing house. \$.60 net.)

IX

Training for Service

The magic word to-day is "service." Its only competitor is "efficiency." We may grow tired of them both; but of the things which they stand for we shall not soon grow weary.

A new manager came to a privately owned gas company which had at one time the reputation of being the most unsatisfactory business house in the city with which to do business. He put the employees to school. They had one lesson to learn—and learn it they did. They were taught to render the community a generous service. In but a little while the gas company became one of the places with which people took special delight in doing business.

There is a bank which pays no interest on deposits, but renders service to its patrons in unusual ways. Its stock sells at an almost unheard of figure above its par value. This bank capitalized the idea of service.

In the commercial world service is, indeed, the watchword of the hour. Shall the Church be content with a membership which has failed to realize what this word means? As one studies the Church to-day he is led to feel that a vast number of members are already within its fold who have never known the real meaning of the word "service." They certainly do not serve. They expect to be served and they are keen to criticize if the

minister or other official does not pay so much attention to them as to some one else. Apparently—for one hesitates to impugn motives—they are in the Church to get, not to give.

Shall we ever have a Church which has in it more people who are serving than who are being served? That is a real hope for the future. It is based simply on the fact that, increasingly, we are coming to understand our boys and girls of this Senior age and later, and as we understand them we are finding the way to their full salvation. The theory that you must pamper young people of this age, feed them, amuse them, appeal to their selfishness, is about as hard a theory to kill and bury as is ever met. It is persistent in its resurrective qualities. Of course, entertaining these young people is the easiest method of approach to their lives. It takes less brain and energy to serve them than it does to teach them to serve others. No doubt this fact explains a condition not at all creditable.

If the writer could be assigned the task of training those who were to constitute a given church membership twenty years from now he would ask nothing more than that they might be assigned to him in this Senior period. Here is the place where service for others begins to become a passion. If they have lost their love for such service a few years later it is largely because they found no outlet for their eager desires to serve in these years from sixteen up.

How shall we train these young people for service? The answer cannot be given in terms of concrete sug-

gestions set down in order. There are too many variable elements in the situation: the personality of the boy or girl involved; the tastes and the accomplishments; the character and scope of the church work; the homes and the neighborhood, whether in city, village, or country. But the answer can be set down in principles; if these are right, the particular type of service which will fit each case may readily be discovered.

1. A right attitude toward the matter is the first necessity. It has become a fixed habit of many teachers to think of boys and girls only as those who must be entertained, who must be ministered to. It is most difficult to grasp the meaning of the dawning outreach to find a way to help—to give and to cease receiving. This fact is most difficult for adults to learn. Hence we keep right on, ever offering to those who fain would make offering to others. The first essential is a right attitude on our own part.
2. Diversity of personalities must be recognized. Frequently teachers fail to develop service tendencies because they try to turn a whole group into one groove. Tastes and inclinations differ; one is quick, another slow of thought and movement. Therefore tasks must be varied. There must be something for each to do, if all are to be at work. The individual must be thought of, as well as the group.
3. Latent responsibility must be developed. This can never be done by assigning a task and then relieving the pupil of it before it is completed. A teacher may sigh over the "utter lack of sense of responsibility" in her pupils, while she at the same time is a persistent offender in this very

respect. The task given to a pupil may not be done so promptly or so well as if the teacher, with a larger experience, did it. But the pupil may be more important than the task. The greatest accomplishment may be the training of the pupil rather than the finishing of the task. Hence the first consideration is the pupil's best good. What course will serve him best? Surely, leaving him full responsibility for an assignment made; not relieving him of it.

4. This does not mean any lack of sympathetic interest and assistance. The rôle of taskmaster is not to be carried out by a Bible-school teacher. But to work with a pupil, in the joint accomplishment of something worth while, is a privilege; and it frequently results in the very best of success.
5. The preceding paragraphs seem to indicate an assigned task. But this is a mistaken notion of what is real service. For service, in its best sense, is not something I am set to do as a task, but rather something I discover may be done and which I gladly undertake as my contribution to the general good. Here, then, is the suggestion that teachers help pupils to carry out their own best intentions.
6. Of course, others will suggest avenues of usefulness. But some adroitness will frequently allow the pupils to discover these avenues themselves and to offer their help. That is better; it is a true development in the right direction. Half the training consists in letting these boys and girls learn to see a need when it exists. It is the first step toward unselfishness. Self-centered interest never sees the need in another; it is too dis-

turbing to his own complacency. Happy is the boy or the girl in this Senior age who is sensitive to the needs all about his or her own life.

7. Everything must breathe the atmosphere of unselfish service. Lessons, outings, socials, the general program, must all be geared up to unselfish expression. The teacher need not say much about service to others; but he must everlastingly teach it in a score of ways, and try, oh! so earnestly, to live it.
8. The best plan is to educate the group to the point where every plan for each pupil or for the class is matched by a plan for others. A social evening once a month? Most assuredly; but, as well, an evening once a month for the benefit of others whose lives have no glint of social privilege in them. A picnic once a year for the class? Certainly; provided the class gives a picnic once a year for some group of children not so favorably circumstanced. The habit will become so firmly fixed that, sooner or later, they will not be content with giving others an equal of what they themselves have received; they will want others to have more than they.
9. The opportunities for service offered must be man- and woman-size rather than childish. This is extremely important. These young folks are facing away from childhood toward the interests of the adult. The challenge which calls them to service must be from the direction of adult life rather than from the direction of child life, which they have left behind. If young people who are eager for the larger thing, and quite capable of handling it, are given minor tasks to do, they are apt to be utterly disgusted.

10. Service must be based on Christian ideals, instituted and carried forward in prayer. This kind of service is not to be compared with a type of so-called social service which never rises above the ethical. Genuine social service is Christian. Christ is the great Example of the right kind of social service. It is the height of folly to believe that these young people do not welcome the challenge of the Christian appeal. They want the best there is, and will be content with none cheaper. With the right kind of help they will rise to heights of unselfish, Christian service that may scarcely have been dreamed of.

These boys and girls, then, are emerging into the service areas of their lives. The next few years will determine, almost surely, whether they will develop into large-hearted service Christians, or whether they will gradually shrivel up and hide their lives in a shell of selfishness, as so many have done before them.

As the teacher interprets Christian service, so will these boys and girls learn it. If he gives his service grudgingly, complainingly, he may not expect more from them. If his service is buoyant, eager, abounding, they will have the genuine opportunity to be at their best.

May God help all teachers to serve as Christ served!

TEST QUESTIONS

1. What is meant, in your own thought, by the word "service"?
2. Why does the Senior boy respond to the idea of service?

3. What is the best illustration of which you know of the satisfaction-earning value of service?

4. Name at least five principles which lie at the base of the process of getting boys to serve eagerly, and illustrate each with a concrete example.

5. In what way does your own attitude toward service affect the attitude of these boys?

For further reading: Apply to your denominational board for specially helpful pamphlets on this subject.

How Shall I Test My Work?

Should a Bible-school teacher ever take account of stock? Most assuredly. But how?

First, by asking himself some direct questions: "Am I growing? Am I a better teacher to-day than I was a year ago? Have I learned more about these pupils in my class? Have I learned more about the age period in which they are living? Do I know more about my Bible?" The pupils have grown during the last year. Indeed, they may have grown much more than a year, for they gather experience and change viewpoints in this period very rapidly. Hence the teacher, too, must grow; for he must keep in the lead of these active minds.

Second, by frankly setting down results. It is true that there are results which may not be seen; the teacher does not reap much that he sows. But by the same figure he has a right to expect to see some signs of growth in the field in which he has been privileged to do the planting.

But what results? The Word of God, rightly taught, is truly "living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. 4:12. The writer has profound convictions on this point. He has seen the Word of God at work in the

hearts of men and women, of boys and girls. This Word does all that Paul says it does. Therefore, if the teaching of the Word fails to produce results, that is where the trouble lies. It is not with the Word; it must be with the teaching.

Relentlessly the teacher must press this challenge home to himself. Does the Word of God, as he teaches it, change the lives of the pupils? This shall be the test of all teaching work. If it fails to meet this test, there are at least two courses open: the teacher may quit, acknowledging his failure, which is the cowardly way; or he may discover wherein he is at fault and do better, which is more courageous.

But the test must be fair. A teacher should not expect to find all the fruits of the Spirit present in a young life. He may find their beginnings. He should not expect too sudden transformations. Conversion in the form of a cataclysm may be found in a more mature life, with a previous history of neglect or avowed sin; conversion, in the form of finding oneself, in an immature life may be very gradual. There is no standard by which one may safely measure the gain per month or per year as a result of teaching contacts; there is a principle, however, which says that there should be appreciable gain.

Headaches and heartaches will come from applying this test to a teacher's work. The stock-taking may make him feel at times that he is losing ground, rather than gaining it. Any one Sunday may yield good reason

for a resignation; but he must gauge his work by averages, over a period of time.

What changes may a teacher expect to see in the lives of Senior boys? Here are several:

1. Increased interest in the Bible.
2. Increased attendance upon Bible school and church.
3. Increasing reverence in attitude and expression.
4. Evidence of more helpful relationships at home.
5. Elimination of dishonesty at school.
6. Improvement in the choice of companions.
7. Growing discrimination in the choice of amusements.
8. Increased interest in discovering a life work.
9. Evidence of growth in the prayer life.
10. Marked growth in unselfishness.

Is there yet another test of the teacher's work? Perhaps there is. It may be applied by asking himself these questions: "Do I come eagerly to my teaching task? Do I do this work gladly? Heavy as are its responsibilities, do I turn to it as a genuine joy in my life?" A failure to answer in the affirmative is not necessarily a sign of failure; but it is the writer's experience that whenever, in his own life, he has come to groan over this teaching privilege as a burdensome task, the results have been very meager. There is a presumption that efficient teachers should leap to the work as a trained athlete, eager for the event, steps to the starting place with spring and resilience in every muscle and with a smile on his face.

Perhaps the summing up of this whole test is to be

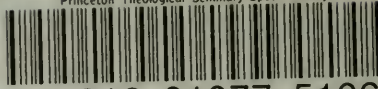
found in a simple statement. If every real impression calls for expression in the life of the pupil, perhaps the same test should be applied to the teacher. To the extent that he is impressed with the major importance of the teacher's opportunity, will he give eager, buoyant expression to this conviction in his contact with his pupils.

TEST QUESTIONS

1. How do I know whether or not I am growing?
2. What results have you definitely seen from your own teaching work?
3. How may increased interest in the Bible be manifested by boys?
4. How is attendance at Bible school a gauge of results? Cannot we get some results without such attendance?
5. Why is a marked growth in unselfishness at the base of many other results?
6. How does my own attitude toward my teaching privilege act as a test of my work?

For further reading: "The Religious Education of Adolescents," by Norman E. Richardson. (Abingdon Press, New York.)

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